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T/EP 99 / 09718



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09. 02. 2000

(74)

Bescheinigung

Certificate

Attestation

REC 16 FEB 2000

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Patentanmeldung Nr. Patent application No. Demande de brevet n°

98204259.0

09/856600

## PRIORITY DOCUMENT

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**Blatt 2 der Bescheinigung**  
**Sheet 2 of the certificate**  
**Page 2 de l'attestation**

Anmeldung Nr.:  
Application no.:  
Demande n°: 98204259.0

Anmeldetag:  
Date of filing: 15/12/98  
Date de dépôt:

Anmelder:  
Applicant(s):  
Demandeur(s):  
N.V. BEKAERT S.A.  
8550 Zwevegem  
BELGIUM

Bezeichnung der Erfindung:  
Title of the invention:  
Titre de l'invention:  
Polymer coated steel wire

In Anspruch genommene Priorität(en) / Priority(ies) claimed / Priorité(s) revendiquée(s)

Staat:  
State:  
Pays:  
Tag:  
Date:  
Date:

Aktenzeichen:  
File no.  
Numéro de dépôt:

Internationale Patentklassifikation:  
International Patent classification:  
Classification internationale des brevets:  
C23C2/38, C23C2/26, C23C28/00, B05D7/20

Am Anmeldetag benannte Vertragsstaaten:  
Contracting states designated at date of filing: AT/BE/CH/CY/DE/DK/ES/FI/FR/GB/GR/IE/IT/LI/LU/MC/NL/PT/SE  
Etats contractants désignés lors du dépôt:

Bemerkungen:  
Remarks:  
Remarques:

The original title of the application reads as follows:  
Steel wire with bright looking surface

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**Field of the invention.**

The present invention relates to a coated steel wire having a bright looking surface and to a method of manufacturing a coated steel wire having a bright looking surface.

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**Background of the invention.**

A number of attempts have already been made to give to a steel wire a bright looking surface and to maintain an acceptable level of brightness during the life of the wire. All of these attempts, however, have some major disadvantages.

10

One of these attempts has consisted in galvanizing a steel wire and enameling the galvanized steel wire so that a lacquered wire is obtained. Such a lacquered wire has the advantage of having an excellent corrosion resistance due to the duplex layer "zinc + lacquer" and the advantage of offering a variety of colors. Experience, however, has shown that for applications where the wire is subjected to high mechanical deformations, the lacquer does not stick on the surface of the wire due to its inherent lack of tenacity.

15

Still another problem is the relatively high coefficient of friction of lacquer coatings. This considerably slows down the speed of the downstream processing of the lacquered steel wire.

20

**Summary of the invention.**

It is an object of the present invention to provide a corrosion resistant steel wire with a bright surface.

25

It is another object of the present invention to provide a steel wire with a typical metallic looking color.

It is also an object of the present invention to provide a steel wire with transparent coating which conserves its transparency.

30

It is still another object of the present invention to provide an adherent coating to a bright steel wire without decreasing the original degree of

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brightness of the steel wire.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a coating to a steel wire with a coefficient of friction which is lower than the friction coefficient of a lacquered steel wire.

5

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a steel wire with a bright looking surface. The steel wire is covered with an intermediate coating layer which gives the brightness to the steel wire and is further coated with a polymer being selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polyesters, polyimides, polyamides and polyphthalamides. This polymer is preferably transparent.

10

15

In comparison with a lacquer coating, these transparent polymers are more tenacious and have a lower coefficient of friction. A friction force test demonstrates that a nylon coating or a polyethylene terephthalate coating provides a friction resistance which is three times smaller than that a zinc coating.

20

The group of polyimides comprises polyamide imide, polyester imide, polyether imide and polyanil imide. Polyamide imide, as a matter of example, provides a good adhesion and has a high melting point.

25

Preferably the coating is a thermoplastic polyester such as polyethylene terephthalate ("PET"), polybutylene terephthalate ("PBT") and polyethylene naphthenate ("PEN").

30

The most preferable embodiment amongst these is polyethylene terephthalate, since it combines the better properties such as high tenacity, low humidity absorption with a relatively low cost.

Within the context of the present invention, the terms "polyethylene terephthalate" or "PET" denote not only homopolymers of ethylene terephthalate but also copolymers of ethylene terephthalate containing not



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more than 20% of other copolymerized units, e.g. derived from other acids than terephthalic acid, such as isophthalic acid or from other glycols than ethylene glycol. The polymer may also contain mixtures of polymers in order to modify certain of the properties thereof.

5

The polyethylene terephthalate coating is more than 50% amorphous, and preferably more than 70% amorphous. This may be achieved by rapid cooling after the extrusion process. In comparison with a crystalline structure of the coating, an amorphous polyethylene terephthalate coating, for example, has a more pronounced luster and is more flexible. Recrystallisation, however, may occur in course of time. In comparison with a PBT coating, recrystallisation happens much slower with a polyethylene terephthalate coating. This is an advantage for a polyethylene terephthalate coating over PBT coating.

15

In comparison with coatings of polyamides such as nylon-6 (PA6), a polyethylene terephthalate coating has a better adhesion and adhesion retention, has a higher corrosion resistance, has a better resistance against ultra-violet light (= better weatherability) and has a lower absorption of water or moisture, and, as a consequence, maintains much better its original degree of transparency and luster. More particularly, polyethylene terephthalate coating absorbs only one tenth of the amount of moisture absorbed by a nylon-6 coating in the same circumstances. Moreover, application of a polyethylene terephthalate coating can be done in an environment-friendly way, i.e. with a much more simpler pre-treatment without the use of chromic acids which would otherwise decrease the degree of brightness and without the use of primers which could also jeopardize the original degree of brightness.

25

30

In a preferable embodiment of the invention, the transparent polymer comprises a transparent organic coloring agent, which can be added to the polymer in the form of small grains in a carrier of a similar or same

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polymer. This embodiment offers the advantage of various colors depending upon the concentration and type of coloring agent : metallic like colors and fluorescent colors may be applied to the steel wire in this way.

5

One way of giving the original brightness to the steel wire is by applying an intermediate metallic coating such as a copper coating, a copper alloy coating such as bronze or brass, a zinc coating, a zinc alloy coating such as a 95% zinc 5% aluminum alloy, a nickel coating, a nickel alloy

10

coating, a tin coating, or a tin alloy coating.

Another way of giving the original brightness to the steel wire is by applying an intermediate coating such as a copper-tin sulfate coating or a copper-sulfate coating.

15

The degree of brightness of the steel wire can be quantified on the bright intermediate coating of the steel wire, either before coating with the transparent polymer, or after removal of the transparent polymer. This quantification has the advantage of being independent of the color of the polymer and of the thickness of the polymer. The degree of brightness

20

of the steel wire can also be quantified on the final steel wire, i.e. coated with the transparent polymer, but may have the disadvantage of being dependent upon the color of the polymer, if any, and upon the thickness of the polymer.

25

The quantification can be done either by determining the peripheral roughness of the steel wire or by determining the so-called L-value of the steel wire.

30

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of manufacturing a steel wire having a bright looking surface. The method comprises the following steps :

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- (a) providing a steel wire ;  
(b) coating the steel wire with an intermediate coating layer ;  
(c) giving a degree of brightness to the intermediate coating ;  
(d) further coating said bright steel wire with a transparent polymer which  
5 is selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polyesters,  
polyimides, polyamides and polyphtalamides.

The coating of the steel wire with the intermediate coating layer can be  
done by means of a hot dip operation, or by means of an electrolytic  
10 coating process.

A required degree of brightness can be given to the intermediate coating  
layer by wet drawing the intermediately coated steel wire in a suitable  
lubricant.

15 However, wet drawing is not necessary to obtain the required degree of  
brightness. This required degree of brightness can also be obtained on  
the steel wire on its final diameter by suitably cooling the wire  
immediately after it leaves the bath in a hot dip galvanizing operation, or  
by electroplating the steel wire.

20 The further coating with a transparent polymer can be done by means of  
an extrusion process.

The invention is particularly applicable to steel wires which are subjected  
25 to high mechanical deformations.

For low carbon steel wire, which is steel wire with a carbon content  
below 0.20 %, this is the case for bookbinding wire, box stapling wire,  
weaving wire, mattress wire, paper clip wire, coat hanger wire, bucket  
wire, tie wire, lamp shade wire, decoration wire, braiding wire, stitching  
30 wire ...

A typical diameter range for bookbinding wire is from 0.60 mm to  
1.80 mm.

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For high carbon steel wire, which is steel wire with a carbon content above 0.25 %, this is the case for spoke wire.

**Brief description of the drawings.**

5 The invention will now be described into more detail with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein

- FIGURE 1 shows a transversal cross-section of a steel wire according to the invention.

10 **Description of a preferred embodiment of the invention.**

FIGURE 1 represents a transversal cross-section of a steel wire 10 according to the invention. The steel wire 10 comprises a steel core 12, a thin coating 14 of wet drawn zinc so that a bright appearance is obtained and an outer coating 16 of transparent polyethelene teraphtalate. The coating 16 of polyethylene teraphtalate comprises a  
15 transparent organic coloring agent which gives to the steel wire 10 a bright and metallic like appearance.

Such a steel wire according to the invention can be manufactured as  
20 follows.

Starting material is a low carbon wire rod with a diameter of about 5.5 mm. This wire rod is dry drawn until an intermediate diameter of 3.0 mm. The thus drawn steel wire is subjected to heat treatment and is hot dip galvanized at this intermediate diameter of 3.0 mm. The galvanized  
25 steel wire is now wet drawn in a soap solution until a final diameter of 1.2 mm. This wet drawing gives the galvanized steel wire its bright appearance. The drawn steel wire is degreased in order to remove all remaining drawing lubricants from the surface of the steel wire. Finally, a transparant polyethylene teraphtalate coating with transparent organic  
30 coloring agents is applied to the steel wire. The thickness of the polyethylene teraphtalate is coating is about 35 micrometer (35  $\mu$ m).

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Conveniently, these thicknesses range from 10  $\mu\text{m}$  to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ , preferably from 25  $\mu\text{m}$  to 50  $\mu\text{m}$ . Typical values are 35  $\mu\text{m}$  for bookbinding wire and 50  $\mu\text{m}$  for spoke wire.

5 The thus obtained invention steel wire is suitable for use as a bookbinding wire. The polyethylene terephthalate coating adheres well to the steel wire and can withstand the mechanical deformations to which a wires such as a bookbinding wire are normally subjected.

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CLAIMS

- 5                   1. A coated steel wire (10) having a bright looking surface,  
said steel wire (10) having a steel core (12),  
said steel core (12) being covered with an intermediate coating layer  
(14),  
said steel wire being further coated with a polymer (16) being  
selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polyesters,  
polyimides, polyamides and polyphthalamides.
- 10                   2. A steel wire according to claim 1,  
wherein said polymer is a thermoplastic polyester selected from the  
group consisting of polyethylene terephthalate, polybutylene  
terephthalate and polyethylene naphthenate.
- 15                   3. A steel wire according to claim 2,  
wherein said thermoplastic polyester is polyethylene terephthalate.
- 20                   4. A steel wire according to any one of the preceding claims,  
wherein said polymer is a transparent polymer.
- 25                   5. A steel wire according to any one of the preceding claims,  
wherein said polymer comprises a transparent organic coloring  
agent.
- 30                   6. A steel wire according to any one of the preceding claims,  
wherein said intermediate coating is a metallic coating such as a  
copper coating, a copper alloy coating, a zinc coating, a zinc alloy  
coating, a nickel coating, a nickel alloy, a tin coating or a tin alloy  
coating.

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7. A steel wire according to any one of claims 1 to 5,  
wherein said intermediate coating is a coating such as a copper-tin  
sulfate coating or a copper-sulfate coating.
- 5 8. A method of manufacturing a coated steel wire (10) having a bright  
looking surface, said method comprising the following steps :  
(a) providing a steel core (12) ;  
(b) coating said steel core (12) with an intermediate coating layer  
(14) ;  
10 (c) giving a degree of brightness to said intermediate coating (14) ;  
(d) further coating said bright steel wire with a polymer (16) being  
selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polyesters,  
polyimides, polyamides and polyphthalamides.
- 15 9. A method according to claim 8,  
wherein said coating with said intermediate coating layer is done by  
means of a hot dip operation.
- 20 10. A method according to any one of claims 8 or 9,  
wherein said giving of a degree of brightness to said intermediate  
coating is done by wet drawing the coated steel wire.
- 25 11. A method according to any one of claims 8 to 10,  
wherein said further coating with a polymer is done by an extrusion  
process.
- 30 12. A method according to any one of claims 8 to 11,  
wherein said method further comprises the step of adding a  
transparent organic coloring agent to said polymer.



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**ABSTRACT :**

5 A coated steel wire (10) with a bright looking surface has a steel core (12) and this steel core (12) is covered with an intermediate coating layer (14) which gives the brightness to the steel wire. The steel wire is further coated with a transparent polymer (16) which is selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polyesters, polyimides, polyamides and polyphthalamides.

10 In comparison with lacquer coatings the present polymer coating has an enhanced tenacity.

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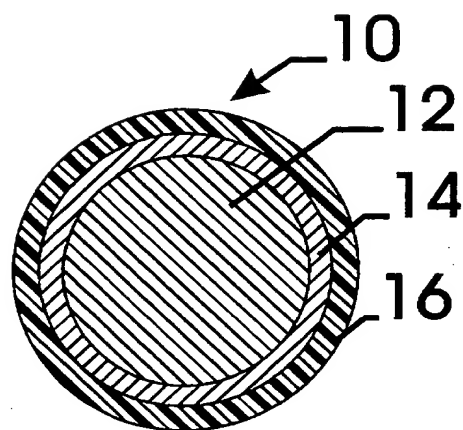


Fig. 1

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